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SUBJECT: CYPRUS: GREEK CYPRIOTS AND TURKISH CYPRIOTS CANCEL ANNUAL MILITARY EXERCISES

¶1. (U) In near back-to-back announcements, both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot authorities announced on October 13 the respective cancellation of their annual "Nikiforos" and "Toros" military exercises, normally conducted in the fall. The exercises were last held in 2007, but canceled in 2008 and also during the Annan Plan era. In the past, the joint Turkish-Turkish Cypriot "Toros" was usually held three-four weeks after the combined Greek-Greek Cypriot "Nikiforos," and both included live fire demonstrations and reinforcements from Turkey and Greece respectively.

¶2. (U) Turkish Cypriot Press Spokesman Hasan Ercakica announced the cancellation of "Toros" at his weekly press briefing on October 13. Ercakica said that the decision to cancel the military exercise should be seen as an "expression of the will (of the Turkish Cypriots) to improve the political atmosphere during the negotiations." He added that the decision had been made in consultation with all relevant parties, i.e. with Turkey.

¶3. (U) In a written statement later that day, RoC Government Spokesman Stephanos Stephanou announced that the government had decided to cancel the "Nikiforos" exercise after the Turkish Cypriot announcement to cancel "Toros."

URBANCIC